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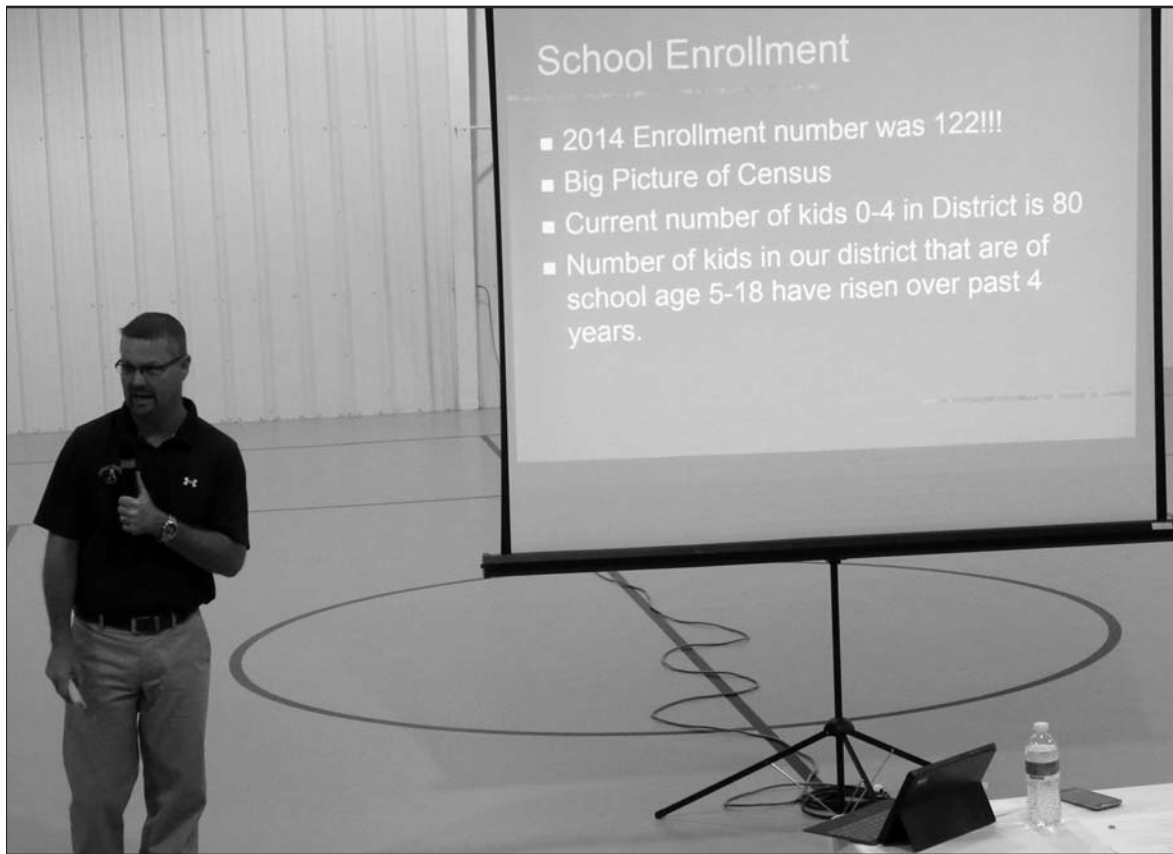
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Plan and Penny Make Big Impact

Town Hall Meeting Reveals Results of LB840 Economic Development Plan and 1% Sales Tax After Nine Years



Joe Bob Atkins gave a Power Point presentation at last Tuesday night's Town Hall meeting, showing the impact the LB840 economic development plan and 1% sales tax has had on the community. The plan and tax is set to expire in December of 2016, and residents will go to the polls on September 15 of this year to vote on whether or not to extend the plan and 1% tax. (Janet Larreau photo)

Plan and Tax Set to Expire, Residents will Vote on Whether or Not to Extend Plan and Tax this September

After nine years in place, the unforeseen and remarkable impact of Arnold's LB840 economic development plan and 1% local sales and use tax was revealed to residents at a Town Hall meeting last Tuesday night at the community center. Residents also heard that the plan and tax is set to expire in December of 2016, and they will go to the polls again on September 15 of this year to vote on whether or not to extend the plan and 1% tax.

Arnold Economic Development board member Holly Hornung-Remund opened the meeting, saying that other communities have been talking about Arnold and want to replicate what Arnold has done. Attesting to this fact, she read several letters written by community leaders from area towns and a government official.

One common theme was expressed in the letters: Arnold was ahead of the game in implementing LB840 and has set an example for other small communities in the state to follow.

Hornung-Remund also introduced guests Deb Eggleston, Business Development Field Staff, and Kelly Gewecke, Business Development Consultant, from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. Also present was Eric Hellriegel, of Miller & Associates Consulting Engineers, P.C., who is providing services to review the economic development plan that will be put before voters in September.

Joe Bob Atkins, who with Larry Moran, Max Smith, Mitch Geiser, Alan Gunther, Lana Cool, Janet Larreau and John Reed, formed the first economic

development board some 10 years ago, spoke, saying that a lot of people did a lot of work to get LB840 off the ground. When the group formed, Atkins served as president. At that time, the community was losing student population in the school, businesses were being lost and household medium income was low compared to other towns in the state.

"We needed resources (to turn things around), and LB840 seemed the best way. The first vote passed by 90 percent. If we don't vote it in again, we will lose what we have gained," he said.

Atkins gave a Power Point presentation, showing the original slides from a Town Hall meeting in 2006 and slides showing where Arnold is at now.

Making Arnold more attractive to young families, and increasing student enrollment was one of the original board's goals. The number of kids in the district that are of school age 5-18 has risen over the past four years. Student enrollment is up 47 from 2004. The number of very young children is growing even faster.

"We have 80 children ages 4 and younger in the district now. We are on an upswing now," he said.

When compared with 19 other similarly sized Nebraska villages, Arnold's median household income (MHI) of \$25,500.00 in 2000 did not compare favorably. Only one other village, Hershey, had a lower MHI. Arnold's MHI is now at \$40,893.00 - a 62% increase and \$15,000.00 above Broken Bow.

The decline of business activity in 2006 was also of concern. Arnold had lost several businesses in recent years.

"Our goal with LB840 was business retention and transfer. We wanted to stop the bleeding," said Atkins. "The Economic Development Corporation was awarded a \$50,000.00 grant to start revolving business loans, and it has stopped the decline of business."

Business activity today shows 37 AEDC loans to local businesses totaling \$180,700.00, 35 grants to local businesses in the amount of \$52,584.00, the addition of 26 owners' jobs and 15 employee jobs.

Business activity also includes \$90,000.00 collected at the Custer County courthouse on motor vehicle sales since 2006. This money goes directly to the village for street repairs and improvements. With this, the village has dropped its levy from .495490 in 2006 to .404740 in 2015.



A high quality image of a piggy bank with a penny being dropped in was used in the promotional campaign for the first vote on the LB840 economic development plan and the 1% sales tax back in 2006. The piggy bank will be used again in this year's get out and vote campaign to extend the economic development plan for Arnold and 1% sales tax, which will remain the same.

Most astonishing of all, the estimated 1% sales tax in 2006 was \$33,038 based on taxable goods sold at \$3,303,800. The actual 2014 sales tax was \$73,542.00. Taxable goods sold was \$7,354,200.00 - a 120% increase, proof of a growing and thriving economy.

"LB840 has stabilized the tax base and money is rolling back in. We aren't asking for outside money," said Atkins.

"Has the AEDC done its job?" asked Atkins. "It has met and exceeded those goals. No one likes taxes, but we have to get out and vote and do it again."

During the meeting, several business owners spoke about

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Well-known AC/DC tribute band "Shoot to Thrill" will perform at this year's Devil's Den Motorcycle Rally.

Devil's Den Bike Rally Set for This Weekend

Motorcycles will be roaring into town this Saturday, July 11, for the annual Devil's Den Motorcycle Rally at the Arnold Community Center. Organizers have added a couple of new events, and the concert will feature four bands.

The day will start with breakfast served from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., by the Arnold After Prom. The fundraiser is open to the public.

The bikes will be on display during "Show & Shine," scheduled from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Blessing of the Bikes by Jim Hammond will be at 11:00 a.m., the National Anthem will be sung by Sunny Jackson at 11:15 a.m., and the Poker Run starts at 11:30 a.m. The run will start at Keane's Suzy's Pizza or Jim's Bar in Arnold. Bikes will then be off to Fubar at Anselmo, Sylvester's at Broken Bow, Big Jim's at Oconto, Hangar 22 at Callaway and back to the Arnold Community Center.

The Christian/rock band "Forgiveness 490" will perform from 5:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. This performance is free to everyone. Starting at 4:00 p.m., to 7:00 p.m., a barbecue dinner will be served, and this again is open to the public for a donation.

All day events include a silent auction that ends at 8:00 p.m., and a dunk tank ran by the Heartland Hellcats roller derby team. Founded in 2012, the Heartland Hellcats are a group of athletes dedicated to the

sport and lifestyle of roller derby, including physical fitness, teamwork, sportsmanship and service. The skaters aim to be great teammates and role models, working together to support good causes and promote a healthy way of living.

A helicopter showing by Midwest Medair is new this year. The showing will be held from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., at the Arnold fire station. A crew will be there to show the helicopter and answer questions. They will also have a booth at the community center. Memberships to Medair, which are normally \$50.00, will be raffled off, given away and on the silent auction.

Other events include a loudest pipes contest by Express AVL, Miss Devil's Den contest, Beer Belly contest and arm wrestling.

A rock/blues based band from Gothenburg, "Disconnect The Silence" will perform from 5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., followed by "The Fools," playing straight up rock and roll from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. "Shoot to Thrill," a well-known AC/DC tribute band, will perform from 9:00 p.m.

After Prom will serve breakfast from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, and the public is welcome.

Portions of the profits from the bike rally go to Autism Awareness, the TeamMates program, and the suicide prevention organization Out of the Darkness.

Arnold Included in 24 Epic Fireworks Shows in Nebraska



A photo of Arnold's public fireworks display is among 24 listed as "epic" on www.onlyinyourstate.com. The display is purchased and planned by Barb Gunther each year. The Sandhills Open Road Challenge is sponsor, and Westbrook Audio provides music at Old Mill Park.

When Arnold residents and visitors from out-of-town settled in to watch Saturday night's 4th of July fireworks display at Old Mill Park, they were watching what has been listed as one of the 24 epic fireworks shows in Nebraska on the website www.onlyinyourstate.com.

Barb Gunther, who with husband Mike, dad Dell Cerny, and fire department members Randy Connell and Gregg Tickle, has been putting on the display since July of 2003, said she was pretty excited when she was tagged by a friend on Facebook.

"People don't know how many hours it takes to plan and set up the display," said Barb.

Starting each April, Barb watches a list of fireworks provided by a wholesaler at least four times, narrowing it down to the best, and then putting her selections together for the best possible display.

Barb, who is very knowledgeable about powder and shots, said the wholesaler told her this year, "You've done your homework. You picked the best of the best."

"I don't like breaks, I want the sky to be lit up for a full 30 minutes," said Barb, who has also been selling fireworks in Arnold since 1993.